

# DISINFECT AND TEST FLOODED WELLS

Cooperative Extension Service \* University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign \* Disaster Resource

If you are a private well owner, and a natural disaster has occurred on or near your property, there are some things you should know about your drinking water supply.

Once a flood or tornado (with flash flooding) has occurred it is worth checking your well for bacterial infiltration. During a flood of major proportions, bacteria has most likely infiltrated the well. At this point if you are planning to use your well for drinking and cooking purposes, steps toward disinfecting the well should begin. Shock chlorination is the preferred method for eliminating bacterial contamination in wells.

To disinfect a well contaminated with coliform bacteria (bacteria from the intestines of animals or humans), you'll need to chlorinate using a chemical disinfectant such as chlorine tablets or liquid chlorine in required proportions. For drill wells, you'll have to disassemble the top of the casing. For bored or dug wells, open the cover and then add the disinfectant. To kill the pathogens (disease causing organisms) in well water requires a chlorine concentration of at least 100 parts per million (ppm). The chlorine solution must remain in the well for a 24-hour period, preferably overnight, before it is pumped out.

In addition to disinfecting the well, you should also disinfect the plumbing system in the home and other buildings on your property which rely on the well water. To do this, turn on all water faucets after the chlorine is added to the well. When a chlorine odor is detected in the taps, turn off the faucets. Do not use the water lines for several hours (again preferably overnight). After allowing the water to stay in the pipes overnight, you can open the faucets and let the water run until the chlorine smell is no longer present.

Disinfecting the well, however, does not guarantee that the water is free from contamination. After treating the well, take water samples from the well and submit them for testing by a state-certified laboratory. Most labs charge a fee for this service.

Once you have completed shock chlorination, you can use the well water for washing and uses other than drinking. Use the water for about a week and then have the water tested for pathogens, such as Total Coliforms and Fecal Coliforms. If the tests show no contamination, the water can be used for drinking.

The Illinois Department of Public Health has a laboratory equipped to test for bacteria. They may ask some questions about your well, including it's age, location on the property and how recently you have had it tested before the natural disaster.

You may get quicker test results from a private laboratory. The following is a list of commercial laboratories certified by the Illinois Department of Public Health for microbiological analysis of drinking water as of May 1993. They are listed for information only; this is not an endorsement.

For more information contact your local Extension office:



Disaster Resources Web site:  
<http://www.ag.uiuc.edu/~disaster>

ANALYTICAL LABORATORIES, INC.  
28662 W. Northwest Highway  
Barrington, IL 60010  
708/304-8700

ArRo LABORATORIES, INC.  
P.O Box 686  
Joliet, IL 60434  
815/727-5436

CRAWFORD, MURPHY & TILLY  
2750 W. Washington St.  
Springfield, IL 62702  
217/787-8050

DAILY ANALYTICAL LABS.  
1621 W. Candletree Drive  
Peoria, IL 61614  
309/692-5252

DAILY LABORATORIES  
5120 Big Hollow Road  
Peoria, IL 61615  
309/691-4513

ENV. SCIENCE & ENG.  
8901 N. Industrial Rd.  
Peoria, IL 61615  
309/692-4422

ENVIRO-TEST/PERRY LABS.  
319 Ogden Ave.  
Downers Grove, IL 60515  
708/963-4672

KEY LABORATORY SERVICES  
2277 Hubbard St.  
Decatur, IL 62526  
217/875-2691

MCHEMRY ANAL. WATER LAB.  
4318H Crystal Lake Rd.  
McHenry, IL 60050  
815/344-4044

NET MIDWEST, INC.  
850 West Bartlett Rd.  
Bartlett, IL 60130  
708/420-6128

SILLIKER OF ILLINOIS, INC.  
1304 Halstead St.  
Chicago Heights, IL 60411  
708/756-3210

TEKLAB, INC.  
6 Meadow Hgts. Prof. Park  
Collinsville, IL 62234  
618/344-1004

TEST, INC.  
330 5th St., P.O. Box 483  
Peru, IL 61354  
815/224-1650

WESTON/GULF COAST LABS.  
2417 Bond St.  
University Park, IL 60466  
708/534-5200

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